

VZCZCXYZ0009
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSL #0592 3541359
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191359Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2196
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000592

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/17/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: CUBIC: WE COULDN'T YELL AT MOD FOREVER

REF: IIR 6 945 0018 09.

Classified By: DCM Keith Eddins for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On November 28, the Slovak Government reversed an earlier commitment and notified the Ambassador that it would not renew its contract for defense-advisory services with the American consulting firm Cubic. Don Madison, Director of Cubic programs in Slovakia, and Jeff Guild, an employee of Cubic in Slovakia since 2001, presented a frank and sobering picture of defense reform and modernization in Slovakia during an out-briefing with the Ambassador and DCM on December 17.

¶2. (C) Summary continued. Although Post and Cubic worked up to the last moment to renew Cubic's contract for 2009, Guild acknowledged that it was time for Cubic to leave. "They pissed away the eight years we were here," he said, "and we can't yell at them forever. If they didn't get it by now, they won't get it from us." Madison and Guild recommended the IMET program as the USG's best tool for influencing the future direction of the Slovak armed forces and expressed hope that a generational change in the general staff over the next ten years will see U.S.-trained and combat-tested officers take over from the current ensemble who learned their doctrine and tactics in Warsaw Pact academies. End summary.

¶3. (C) The Slovak Ministry of Defense announced it would not renew Cubic's yearly, FMF-financed contract for CY2009 on November 28. Guild said Cubic's access and influence at MoD began to diminish upon the accession of the current government in 2006. During then-Defense Minister Frantisek Kasicky's (now Slovakia's PermRep to NATO) first meeting with Cubic, he made it known he resented the substantial downsizing of the Slovak military's intelligence apparatus that had been completed on Cubic's recommendation while he was serving in its upper ranks. Both representatives of Cubic, and the past and current ODC Chiefs, agree that Americans enjoy far less influence and access at MoD than under the governments of Mikulas Dzurinda from 1998-2006.

¶4. (C) According to the Cubic team, however, Slovakia's defense reform started to go wrong in 2004, a year before Slovakia joined NATO and two years before the current government took power. Guild described the Slovak military as "great at planning but poor at execution," and said Slovakia's first 10-year plan for defense reform went off track in 2004 because that was the first year in which the plan called for investment. Guild said that Slovakia "essentially hasn't bought a new piece of equipment in eight years." (Comment: Slovakia has invested in a minimal number of locally-made products including the Bozena mine-clearing device and the Alligator armored personnel carrier. Slovakia also has a contract with a consortium led by BAE Systems for an ultra-modern mobile communication system. End comment.)

¶5. (C) The Cubic team also lamented the evisceration over the past two years of two of the three Centers of Excellence into which MoD once planned to invest. The Career Development

Center for officers at the National Defense Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas was made obsolete when the Academy was re-organized and professional officers on the faculty lost their positions to academics. Authority over the Joint Warfare Training Center (JWTC) in Lest, into which the USG has invested nearly 15 million USD in FMF funds since 2002, passed from the General Staff to a civilian in the MoD. Cubic reports the new Director has shown "no interest in combat training." In 2007, the MoD approved the payment of per diem to soldiers training at JWTC, implying that training is something above and beyond the normal call of duty, and straining the already tight training budgets of units.

¶6. (C) The one bright spot among the "Centers of Excellence," according to Cubic, is the NCO Academy. Guild recommended that Post support the work of the NCO Academy and the NCO corps as loudly and as often as possible since "they have no power" and "no one else will." The Cubic team also gave credit to the MoD for turning around its top-heavy structure and abolishing conscription. "There are now more lieutenants than colonels, and that is a good thing," said Guild.

¶7. (C) Comment. Post will encourage MoD to invest -- FMF funds in particular -- into the most effective training and modernization during 2009. We will monitor the training management efforts of the Slovak Armed Forces and continue to support the U.S. objective of enhancing Slovak military capabilities through FMF and IMET programs. We will also continue to demonstrate our support and appreciation for the NCO corps and the 5th Special Forces regiment. End comment.
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